

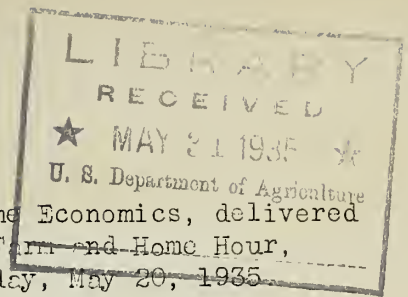
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HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR

Home Canning Questions



A radio talk by Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 50 associate NRC stations, Monday, May 20, 1935.

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Monday is often a pick-up, catch-up kind of a day. The Household Calendar doesn't very often go on the air on Monday, so I'm going to use this chance to answer some of the questions that have come to me recently in letters.

First of all, canning questions. There are dozens of home canning letters these days. And when homemakers in Neodesha, Kansas, and Bridgeton, New Jersey, and many other places all write me about canning, it's a sure sign that lots of other women have the same questions in their minds but don't have time to take pen and paper in hand.

Let's start with this letter from Neodesha, Kansas. It reads: "I am trying to get all the information I can on using tin cans and what kind to use. Would it be all right to use plain tin cans for tomatoes and green beans? And if I use them once for these things could I use the cans again? I lose quite a few jars of things I put up in glass so am trying to decide whether to use tin or glass. What would you advise me to do? I have a lot of glass jars on hand, also a pressure cooker, but I can in the oven most of the time."

Well, our friend in Kansas raises enough points about home canning in that letter to keep me going for some time.

Let's take her question about tin cans and glass jars. I'll answer that first, though that isn't the real cause of her trouble. Her difficulty comes not from the kind of containers she uses but from the way she processes the food after she packs it into the jars or cans.

Plain tin cans are all right to use with tomatoes and green beans. And it is possible and sometimes practicable to use tin cans a second time, provided you have these two things, (1) a special kind of machine to use in opening the tin cans, and (2) a special attachment on your sealer to reflare the cans. You have to have a specially turned edge on the cans before you can seal new lids on them again. Also naturally you wouldn't think of using tin cans a second time if they were badly discolored or corroded. Because of all these ifs, ands, and buts, added to the fact that tin cans are not expensive in the first place, many home canners never attempt to use them a second time. They buy new ones each season. Of course with glass jars it's different. They are good year after year with new rubber rings to help to make an airtight seal.

As I said a moment ago, it isn't the glass jars that are making the trouble for our friend in Kansas. Her jars of green beans are spoiling because she tries to process them in the oven of her stove. And no matter what kind of stove or how hot you heat the oven, that is not a safe way to process green beans, or peas, or corn, or any other nonacid vegetable. The thermometer on the oven door may register 250° F. But that doesn't mean that the beans inside the jars are that hot. If you ran a thermometer down through the lid of a jar to the center and left it

there for an hour and a half, you would find that the mercury column wouldn't climb above the boiling point - 212° F. Probably it wouldn't go that high. But it takes a temperature much hotter than 212° to kill the bacteria that make snap beans spoil.

Why our Kansas friend doesn't use her pressure cooker to can her beans, I can't imagine. That's the only way the Department of Agriculture recommends for home canners to process their nonacid vegetables. The reason is that you can get a very high temperature quickly when you hold steam under pressure. Ten pounds of steam pressure is equivalent to 240° F. So if you keep jars of beans under 10 pounds for 35 minutes, you drive that heat through the beans and kill off the troublesome bacteria.

People write to us occasionally and say that they process their beans and peas in the boiling water bath. Then generally they say, "and only a few spoil." Well, we answer, why have any spoil if you can help it? And it's more luck than good management if they have to throw away only a few. Naturally the Department of Agriculture doesn't want anybody to take chances. We'd be derelict in our duty if we didn't give people the benefit of our scientific experiments on home canning.

So of course I sent the lady in Kansas a copy of our bulletin called "Canning fruits and vegetables at home." The number is 1471-F, and I'll do the same by any of you if you don't already have reliable, scientifically tested time-tables for canning the fruits and vegetables from your garden.

A week or two ago I read a few lines from Amy Lowell's poem on "Lilacs." All the world loves lilacs, it seems. I certainly have enjoyed the letters and the poems about lilacs that some of you have sent me.

There's another flower in bloom in Washington now that strikes a responsive chord in almost everybody. That's a pansy. I wish you all could see the great beds of velvety, purple and blue and yellow and white pansies down in Potomac Park. The pansies in Washington in May are soon going to be as famous as the cherry trees in April. Don't forget to visit the pansies in Potomac Park if you come to Washington in May. There are floodlights on them all during the evening, but of course pansies are at their best with the sunlight shining on them.

And now time's up. Goodbye until next time.